

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	3403 Rodman Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Cleveland Park Historic District	X Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	June 28, 2012	X Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	12-420	X Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett	New Construction

Angela Yu of Cunningham Quill Architects, representing owner Todd Dorfman, seeks the Board's concept review of a porch addition on the front of this Cleveland Park home. The house is one of six Colonial Revival dwellings in a row designed in 1923 by M. W. Offutt, Jr. for Cleveland Park developer W.D. Sterrett.

Proposal

The house at 3403 Rodman presents a simple, unarticulated façade with a brick veneer on the first floor and siding above. Two dormers have been added to the roof and the side porch has been screened in with an addition placed above it.

The proposal would add a small front porch over the entrance with a gable roof, square columns, and an arched entry and ceiling, mimicking the arch of the existing fanlight. The stoop and front walk would be replaced with bluestone and a new screen door added to the street face of the side porch.

Evaluation

The Board has been reluctant to approve proposals for additive, historicist architectural features, which are supplemental to the architect's original design intent. Such proposals are certainly inappropriate when they are not, in fact, historically appropriate or accurate for the style and era of construction. However, the Board has also taken a somewhat more nuanced approach in cases where an argument can be made that the additive feature is itself compatible with the character of the affected property and is closely based on relevant historical precedent.

In this instance, side gabled Colonial Revival houses, which dominated residential architecture of the 1920s through the 1940s, commonly featured entry porches. The most frequent details for these porches include gable or barrel-shaped roofs, single or paired square columns with articulated capitals, arched openings that followed the arch of the fanlight, projecting cornices, and cornice returns.

A study of Offutt's 1920s Colonial Revival houses, of which there are quite a few in northwest Washington, shows that he designed them with entry porches more often than not. The houses at 2608 36th Street, 3600 Edmunds Street, and the abutting neighbors at 3405, 3507, and 3509 Rodman all have original entry porches (although their styles are slightly different). 3415 Rodman, in particular, could serve as a model for how he designed porches for houses of this type and size.

While the Board's guidelines *Porches and Steps on Historic Buildings* indicate that adding front porches can be an inappropriate change, a number of applications for porch additions in Cleveland Park have been found to be compatible on a case-by-case basis. Front porches have been approved at 3010 Ordway, where a new front porch replaced an existing non-historic porch; 3205 33rd Place, a non-contributing building from the 1950s; and at 3520 Rodman, 3342 Rowland, and 3215 Rowland, where appropriately scaled and designed entry porches were added. Alternately, the Board determined that front porches at 3511 Idaho and 2938 Macomb were not compatible with the architectural character of those houses. The latter, a Dutch Colonial Revival house on Macomb would have removed the original bracketed stoop cover, which was a significant element of the architectural character, and added a feature to a house type that was never intended to have a full width front porch.

In this case, because of the presence of small entry porches on houses from this period, in this architectural style, and by this architect, the HPO finds that adding a porch is a compatible alteration.

However, to ensure compatibility and appropriateness of style, the HPO has recommended several changes to the design to better match Offutt's and other Colonial Revival entry porches, as detailed in the following recommendations. The HPO takes no issue with the proposal to reinstall a screen door on the porch, which photographs show was present in 2004, but has since been removed. Similarly, the HPO notes that, although concrete is the traditional material for leadwalks in Washington DC, cut bluestone has been approved as a compatible alteration in Cleveland Park.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the proposal consistent with the preservation act, and delegate permit approval to the HPO, with the following conditions:

- The porch should be narrowed, so that the engaged posts sit flush against the sidelights.
- The height should be lowered so that the ceiling sits directly above the fanlight.
- An examination of paired columns, as per Offutt's design at 3415 Rodman, should be prepared for consideration, and the capitals should be evocative of 1920s examples.
- A projecting cornice and cornice returns should be added, again to better reflect customary 1920s construction.